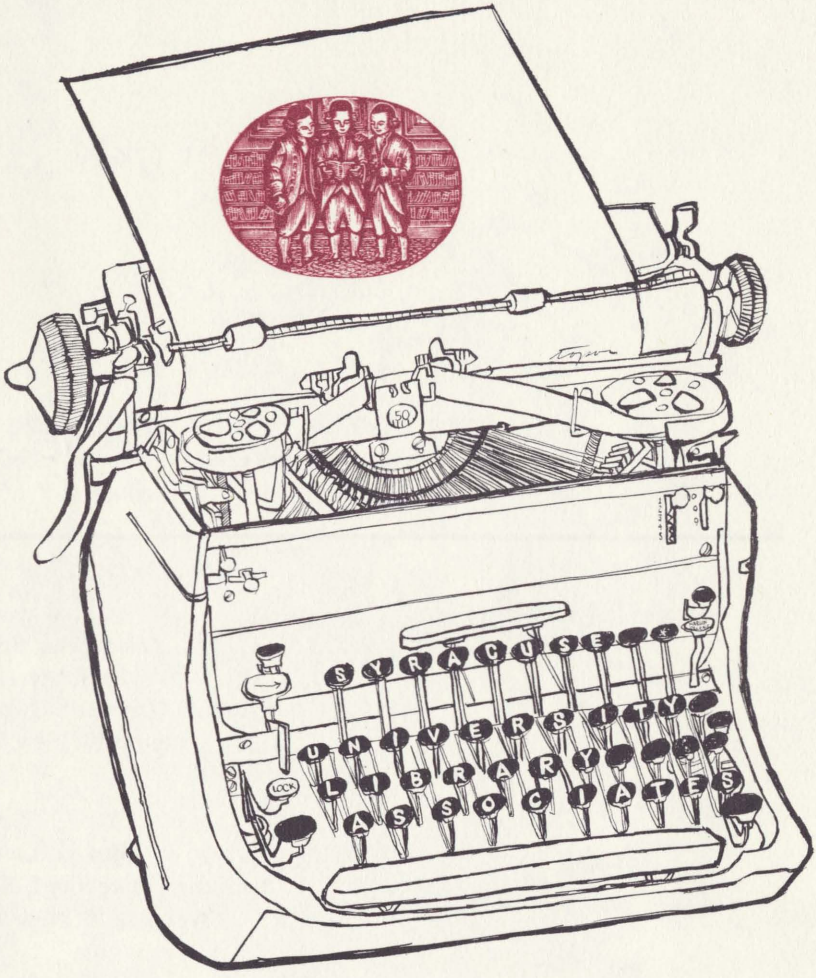

THE COURIER

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Universities and Rare Books

By William A. Jackson

Note: Through the beneficence of the late and esteemed George Arents of New York City, Syracuse University on 30 April 1957 dedicated the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room for the preservation and use of the notable collections of fine books and valuable manuscripts acquired over the years since 1887.

The acquisition of additional rare materials after 1957 increased so rapidly that Mr. Arents soon realized there was a need for remodeling and extension of the facilities, whereupon he announced his gift of a fund for the accomplishment of such renovation and furbishment.

This work was completed in the fall of last year, and on 21 November 1961, under the sponsorship of Syracuse University Library Associates, the new and enlarged Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies. In attendance with other distinguished guests were Mr. and Mrs. William P. Lynas. Mrs. Lynas is the lovely and devoted granddaughter of George Arents who shared and encouraged his pleasure and love of books.

The program for that occasion, attended by a capacity company of Library Associates and their friends, was as follows:

HONORING THE MEMORY OF
LENA RICHARDSON ARENTS AND GEORGE ARENTS

2:00 P.M. HUNTINGTON B. CROUSE HALL

PRESIDING: JOHN S. MAYFIELD, Curator of Manuscripts and Rare Books

"UNIVERSITIES AND RARE BOOKS"

MR. WILLIAM A. JACKSON, Librarian, The Houghton Library
Harvard University

3:00 P.M. LENA R. ARENTS RARE BOOK ROOM, CARNEGIE LIBRARY

PRESIDING — WAYNE S. YENAWINE, Director of Libraries

INVOCATION — THE REVEREND ROBERT C. AYERS, Chaplain to Episcopal Students

"LENA RICHARDSON ARENTS AND GEORGE ARENTS"

WILLIAM PEARSON TOLLEY, Chancellor

RESPONSE — MRS. WILLIAM P. LYNAS

BENEDICTION — MR. AYERS

3:30 P.M. FOYER, CARNEGIE LIBRARY

FIRST SHOWING OF THE JOHN DePOL EXHIBITION BY THE ARTIST

RECEPTION FOR LIBRARY ASSOCIATES AND GUESTS

Mr. Jackson's scholarly disquisition, under the title, "The Importance of Rare Books and Manuscripts in a University Library," was originally presented as a paper at the conference on "The Place of the Library in a University," held at the Lamont Library, Harvard University, 30-31 March 1949, and then published in the Harvard Library Bulletin, *III, 315-26, 1949. Through Mr. Jackson's kindness, it appears in this issue of the* Courier *in the form in which it was delivered at Syracuse University.*

THIS generation has witnessed a phenomenal growth of rare book collections in American university libraries. In the past such libraries have usually had a reserved section which contained a miscellany, including some real rarities, inferno books, and many other items which were neither rare nor important, but merely fragile or difficult to administer either because of their size or material, or because they really were not books at all but curiosities. Now, in most of the larger university libraries special departments have been established for the preservation and administration of rare books, and the relative growth in size and expense of these departments has frequently been greater than that of the libraries of which they are a part. This afternoon let us consider whether this expensive growth is justified by the utility of these books in our educational processes.

But first, may we pause to define what a "rare book" is? The term is often an embarrassment to those whose lives are spent mainly in the study and care of such books, for, far too often, to the layman it appears to have a connotation of triviality and superficiality which we believe to be unwarranted. "Uncommon" or "seldom found" is only

one meaning of the word "rare," and although the one which perhaps first comes to mind, is neither the traditional nor the proper one when used in the phrase "rare books." The *Oxford Dictionary* gives as one of the definitions of the word "rare": "unusual in respect of some good quality; of uncommon excellence or merit, remarkably good or fine; distinguished," and, aptly enough, as the earliest use of the word in this sense instances William Caxton's prologue to the *Book callid Caton,* 1483: "There was a noble clerke named pogius . . . whiche had in the cyte of Florence a noble & well stuffed lybrarye whiche alle noble

William A. Jackson

straungers comynge to Florence desyred to see. And therin they fonde many noble and rare bookes. And whanne they had axyd of hym whiche was the best boke of them alle, and that he reputed for best. He sayd that he helde Cathon glosed for the best book of his lyberarye." A "rare book" is then a book which either has been regarded for generations as an intrinsically important one, or which, if a little-known book, may be so regarded when its virtue has been recognized.

It has been often observed by bookmen that a volume which has only its rarity to commend it, even one which is so "rare" as to be unique, may well be worthless. It is only when in varying degrees intrinsic worth, condition, and rarity are combined that one has a "rare book." For example, a telephone book of New York City for even one of the later years of Edwin Arlington Robinson might well be scarcer and more difficult to find today than a city directory of the later years of Franklin's life, and yet the telephone book would hardly fetch ten cents. It may well be that a hundred years from now the scholars of that time will recognize the usefulness of our current telephone books and then they may be sought after as avidly and perti-

naciously as we now seek the city directories of one or two centuries ago. Then, because their worth has been recognized, they will be "rare books"; because they will be uncommon they will be doubly valuable; and because the paper on which they are printed is of a poor quality, ones in good condition will have an added virtue.

In considering rare books in university libraries, it is pertinent to examine what role, if any, they may have in solving the educational problems of our generation. Our educationists rightly regard "the capacity for research as a test of ability in scholars and a guarantee of soundness in teachers," and they recognize that in the humanities there is a disciplinary tradition as severe and exacting as that of any of the sciences, and indeed even more venerable. The sciences of epigraphy and palaeography, the newer procedures of bibliography, the patient assembling of data in history and biography, textual criticism—these are the time-proved methods and processes of humanistic scholarship, and scholarship will not remain sound unless training in such disciplines is fairly widespread. And in all of these disciplines the access to original material, often, of course, rare books or manuscripts, is essential if the training is to be maintained at a level which will enable the younger scholars to advance beyond their teachers. How easy it is for humanistic scholarship to become static without access to research material may perhaps be illustrated by the phenomenon observable among many of the most competent of our Indic scholars, who can read any printed text in that field but can hardly identify even the language of a palm-leaf manuscript, ancient or modern.

In the past, many of our scholars received their training in these sciences in Europe as part of their graduate work, and it is to be hoped that in the future an even larger number will be granted the opportunity for study in the libraries, muniment rooms, and seminars of Europe. These larger numbers may be an impediment, however, for if our students arrive without some familiarity with the material they are to use, they will at best lose much valuable time, and will often be denied access to the muniments and manuscripts they wish to see, because they will be unable to convince the custodians of those documents that they are sufficiently competent to be entrusted with them. This, of course, is particularly true in those fields involving the use of early manuscripts, for all the wealth of such material that has crossed the Atlantic in the past three or four generations does not equal the riches to be found in London, Paris, or Rome, while of muniments we have only scattered examples, useful for training but hardly suitable for research.

Nevertheless, the American palaeographers trained by Rand at

Harvard and Lowe at Princeton, to name only two, although they have perforce had to begin with facsimiles, have had available sufficient original material with which—(I was going to say, to try their teeth)—with which to try their prentice skill, so that many of them have gone on and bid fair to equal their masters. And the difference between learning with facsimiles only and having original material to work with suggests the predicament of a man who, never having heard an orchestra or an organ, tries to understand Bach from the score alone. To some of you this may sound merely sentimental, but the limitations of photographic reproduction are too well known for me to discuss at this time. However, I may say that, useful, indeed indispensable, as such aids to scholarship are, they cannot, in many cases, be substituted for the originals without grave danger of error.

In printed books the relative strength, in many fields, is not so overwhelmingly unbalanced. There are many subjects and authors of which the holdings of American universities are as complete, or more so, than those of any one foreign library, as, for example, the early Mexican printing at the University of Texas, or the law books at Harvard, the Goethe collection at Yale, or the Petrarchs at Cornell, to name only a few. In these and many other subjects and authors, the scholar can find one or more university collections which have virtually all the printed books and pamphlets that belong in a complete collection of that subject or author, together with all the relevant reference material. A student of John Locke, for example, can find at Harvard every book by Locke known to his bibliographer, as well as probably most, if not all, of the printed commentary, certainly a more nearly complete collection than exists in any one library in England. (If, having used that, he wishes to carry his researches further, he must then go to the Bodleian to use the Lovelace collection, to the Public Record Office, and the other manuscript archives of England.) So it is in countless fields; the resources of American university libraries for scholarly work in the humanities and in the history of science, so far as the printed materials are concerned, are already rich. In spite of many gaps and many weaknesses, there are few fields in which there are not some representative books with which our scholars can become familiar with the problems, textual or bibliographical, peculiar to their subjects.

It is true that these resources are not very evenly divided among the universities of the country, and probably never will be, in spite of the large sums of money presently available to some of the newer state institutions. In general, there would appear to be no very close correlation between the age of university libraries or their total budgets

on the one hand and their strength in rare books on the other. Far more important, it would seem, is the presence on their faculties, on their governing boards, in their libraries, or among their alumni, of men who have recognized the value of such material.

George Lyman Kittredge is still remembered by many of us present here today, a giant among scholars, the bibliography of whose writings occupies more than a hundred pages, and whose influence upon scores and hundreds of living scholars cannot be measured. It is conceivable, however, that posterity may conclude that his greatest contribution to scholarship lies not in his own writings, or in the innumerable men whom he trained to his own rigorous standards, but in the ballad and folklore collections which, on the foundations laid by F. J. Child, he built at Harvard, without the aid of any special grant, fund, or any other means than his own insistence that, however meager the book-funds might be, those books must be acquired. These collections are not now being used in the same way and for the same purposes that Kittredge used them. Studies in ballad literature in the Child-Kittredge-Rollins tradition are not at the moment in fashion. However, these collections are in constant use by the students of the American folk ballad and those studying ballad music. It is, perhaps, not proper for a mere librarian to say whether this is a better use or not, but I refer to it in order to call your attention to the fact that a collection of rare books, even one severely restricted in scope, may be used for many different purposes by many different students. Each generation must rewrite and reinterpret the history of the past, and the critical standards of each generation always have been and always will be different.

We have observed that neither age nor endowment is necessarily a coefficient of the wealth of rare books in university libraries, but age apparently does have some relation to the type of material collected, for the newer libraries in general have tended to collect books and manuscripts of more recent periods and, in particular, to specialize, though by no means exclusively, and with some notable exceptions, in American books and manuscripts. These fields cannot be said to have been neglected by the older institutions, as witness Yale's great Aldis and Coe collections, but the preference for the later and the American has obviously, judging by the results, been both wise and fruitful, for thereby they have often gathered material that is not elsewhere available. Brown University is without a peer in printed Americana before 1800, though it can hardly be said to have deserved its good fortune through any effort of its own, but Michigan and Virginia have, by the vision of their librarians and, doubtless, a great deal of hard work,

as well as good fortune going in one case under the name of Clements and in the other under the guise of McGregor, done wonders in that earlier period. The collections of historical material, mainly of a somewhat localized interest, which are to be found in such libraries as that of Duke, the University of Texas, and the University of California, the Bancroft collection at Berkeley and the Cowan at Westwood, are important and growing. Furthermore, they are in a large measure not elsewhere duplicated and therefore will increasingly draw to themselves the attention and attendance of scholars from far beyond their local communities.

In other fields besides local history, the emphasis upon the more recent past has reaped a rich harvest, since it is often possible to acquire more nearly complete documentation than is likely for the earlier periods. The collections which are strong in both books and manuscripts are not restricted to those of American origin, such as the Lanier collection at Johns Hopkins or the Cable collection at Tulane, but include foreign ones, such as that of Leigh Hunt at the University of Iowa or of Keats at Harvard. In these, and in many similar collections, it is possible for the scholar to find the major part of the relevant material. Indeed, collections of this type, whether or not they include a large proportion of an author's manuscripts or of his correspondence, in so far as they do contain important unpublished material are among the most useful for a university library, since they afford material for scholarly work on both a large and a small scale. For example, during one recent summer twelve different scholars were at work on the Emerson collection at Harvard, for periods ranging from a few days to the full three months.

The possession of such collections entails responsibilities for their proper preservation and administration which ought not to be lightly assumed; for whenever there is concentrated in one institution any considerable number of important books and manuscripts, the world of scholars has, justly or not, come to expect not only that reasonable access will be given, but that a competent staff will be provided to answer the questions of those who cannot come to the library, and that there will be available cameras for photostat or microfilm reproductions, as well as some at least of the scientific aids, such as ultraviolet lamps and microfilm reading machines, for those who make use of the collections in person. These facilities, together with proper storage, now normally expected to be air-conditioned if the library is in a large city, means for adequate repair and binding, and cataloguing more or less accommodated to the kind of books and manuscripts collected, are all rather costly and only justified if the collections are of genuine

scholarly use. In the larger research libraries with important and growing collections of rare books and manuscripts, the provision of such facilities may, and in many cases does, cost as much as ten per cent of the total budget.

The larger research libraries which possess not only original source material but also vast reference and periodical collections, often in the ratio of one to fifty, are without question obligated to provide the apparatus and the skilled personnel to which I have just referred. Whether institutions which are unwilling or unable to assume the cost of providing such aids are acting in the best interests of learning in general if they accept the custodianship of important material of this nature is a question which perhaps ought not to be dogmatically answered. But all too often it happens that unique material, which would be of use to scholars from a distance and indeed is eagerly sought by them, is kept in libraries without photostat equipment and even without facilities for its proper use or care. While perhaps the tendency today is to make scholarship too easy, this particular hardship is not merely an exasperation but sometimes a virtual denial of access.

The adequate housing of rare book collections is an expensive business, but it has often proved to be well worth the cost in the attention which it draws not only from scholars but also from collectors and the public in general. Usually the books themselves can be utilized as part of the decorative scheme, and the facilities for their exhibition and use provide a constant demonstration of their importance. It will be interesting to observe the effect of the newly constructed rare book reading room and stack in the Harvard Law School upon the support given to that extraordinary collection by the average Law School graduate, who until recently has had little means of knowing how rich are the antiquarian resources of the library where he spends so many hours of his graduate years. This "window dressing" use of the rare books of a great research library, though unrelated to the primary purpose of their acquisition, is one which it would be foolish to ignore.

There is much misunderstanding and ignorance concerning the cost of rare books. The knowledge which laymen acquire comes usually from newspaper accounts of spectacular auction sales, often reported without the background details which would explain why such prices are occasionally paid, mostly by private collectors and in relatively restricted fields. Not many institutions indulge in such activities, and when they do the publicity which results often does more harm to the cause of scholarly rare book collecting than may at first glance seem likely. Generalizations about the cost of rare books, particularly in relation to university acquisition, are admittedly very difficult to make.

Yet it may be observed that almost any field of rare books in which it would be worth while for a university library to collect is likely to contain a few items which will, if obtainable at all, cost many times the prices at which most of the other books can be obtained. The high-priced ones are likely to be either the key books, or natural or artificial rarities, which the library will either have to forego or obtain by the aid of private donors who have become interested in the completing of the collection.

Further, any book which is being avidly collected at the moment would seem a poor choice for an institution. In general this would rule out most, if not all, contemporary "collected" authors, for two reasons: first, because of the uncertainty of their future importance and the cost of keeping as rare books such questionable gambles; and, secondly, because if they are now popular among collectors it is likely either that the price will fall when they are no longer fashionable or that the institution may be given one of the collections currently being formed. As an example, when Galsworthy was at the height of his reputation, the Harvard Library spent a fair sum in acquiring two of the four John Sinjohn books in rather less than the most desirable condition. Since then, not only have these books dropped greatly in price, but on several occasions much finer copies have been offered to the Library as gifts. It is true that most rare books, except some of those valued mainly because of their beauty, were once relatively inexpensive, and that if we only knew what will be valued by those who come after us we might save our successors a great deal of money and effort, but it is unlikely that we should have had the prophetic eye to buy for sixpence or less, a hundred odd years ago, a *Necessity of Atheism* or a Bristol *Lyrical Ballads,* and it is equally unlikely that we shall now be more percipient.

Again, institutional libraries may occasionally be custodians for posterity of books in remarkably fine and fragile condition. If the state of such items should be unique, or of such rarity that it would be extremely difficult to find other examples, their use for normal scholarly purposes may be precluded, in order that they may be preserved physically as bibliographical "type specimens." It might be said of libraries acting as custodians of such books, in Pope's now anachronistic words, that they "value books as women men, for dress." Therefore, it would be the negation of the normal reasons for the acquisition by university libraries of rare books if they sought them always in the finest condition, in "original boards," in "immaculate wrappers," etc. Inevitably every rare book collection will receive a number of such books, and the extra care that their preservation will entail will usually

be sufficient responsibility, so that libraries are well advised not to seek to have all books in such fine condition that if opened at all they will unavoidably be damaged.

All custodians of rare books have been told frequently by otherwise apparently competent and tolerant scholars that they have no use for "first editions," as if they were speaking of tiaras or suits of armor of a feudal aristocracy, with which they, as modern democrats, would have no truck. I venture to say that among the most useful, and certainly the most used books in the collections of our university libraries are those of which there never was a second edition, or at any rate no modern reprint. They are the books which must be studied in order to understand the background and meaning of greater books; they are the ones which are necessary for studies in the history of ideas; and it is by extracting the essence of innumerable books and pamphlets of this character that the history of many periods, since the fifteenth century, is being drawn in truer and more just proportions. Oftentimes such books are traceable in only a single copy, at least in any American library, and therefore, because of their irreplaceability, they are properly cared for among the "rare books," even though, particularly in fields outside those most popular with private collectors, they may not be more costly than the average work of modern scholarship.

It would be convenient to have assembled together in each of our university libraries the greatest monuments of literature, science, art, and history, but of all books they are the ones which can be most easily located in other libraries. They are the ones which have been studied most in the past (though by no means has there been discovered all that this or future generations of scholars might find on a re-examination of them). And they are the ones which have been reproduced in facsimile most frequently and which therefore are available in a partially satisfactory form.

It cannot be said that these great monuments will be consulted frequently by scholars; indeed, in this respect they belong in the category to which librarians hesitate to assign any book, viz., that of "little used." It is unlikely, for example, that anyone during the past decade has consulted, for a scholarly purpose, the magnificent Van Antwerp copy of the first folio of Shakespeare now in the Harry Elkins Widener Collection. But it has been frequently exhibited, and doubtless numbers of people have been moved by the sight of a copy of the book which alone has preserved twenty of Shakespeare's plays. In this way the volume has earned its board and keep many times over. But it has likewise had an imponderable and almost unanalyzable utility. For it is surely not by mere size that libraries are known throughout the

world of scholars, but by the quality of the books on their shelves. If libraries are to be ranked at all, an invidious task which I have no intention of attempting at this time, it must be both by the completeness of their collections and by the number and importance of their books which are of the first rank or which are nowhere else to be found. Further, it is by the possession of these great books that the special collections and resources of the libraries become known, and, also, by a curious magnetism, peculiar to rare books, that other books of like importance are added to them, according, it would seem, to the principle laid down in the Parable of the Talents.

In the year 1543 there were published books by Copernicus, Vesalius, and Ramus, each one of which is important in the story of man's intellectual advance, for together they broke the chains which had bound man's speculative and scientific growth to the Ptolemaic, Galenic, and Aristotelian doctrines. On occasion in the Harvard Library, copies of these books are exhibited together, and the student, young or old, who pauses to look at them in the case and who is not stirred by the sight of them—the neat quarto of Copernicus, the magnificently illustrated folio of Vesalius, and the beautifully printed little octavo of Ramus—such a one, I say, can have only the vaguest knowledge of the revolution in men's thoughts inaugurated and marked by their publication in the same year. There before him lie not mere relics in the history of thought, but a copy of the veritable book, fresh from the printer, which Copernicus saw on his deathbed; of the tome which Vesalius labored with Van Calcar for several years to produce; and of the volume which was condemned by the king and the Sorbonne and eventually cost Ramus his life. It was with these types, these woodcuts, and this paper that first, in 1543, were published these books which ended man's thralldom to the ancient science and made possible the advances of the modern age. One could continue, indefinitely, the catalogue of similar books now treasured in many university libraries of our country. At any moment, the sight of any one of them may be the spark which will kindle in some young scholar the desire to unravel the complex which makes them important for mankind and set forth on a scholarly adventure which may result in one more solid addition to the structure of man's understanding of his past.

But, it may be objected, this is all antiquarian, it is looking backward, and despite Thucydides' dictum that "an exact knowledge of the past is a key to the future which in all probability will repeat or resemble the past," the concepts of our scholars should be in terms of the present and future. I need not repeat to you the truism that though the conditions of life may change, sometimes with vertiginous speed,

human character itself alters slowly, it would seem almost imperceptibly. This "new world" of ours, despite the addition of the fears and hopes which accompany the advances in nuclear physics, will still be inhabited by men and women, who, if there is any civilization worthy the name, will be concerned with what "we instinctively call the higher interests," who will be curious about the whole drama of life, if only because it may reveal important data concerning our present and future.

And in this "new world" it is obvious that the role to be played by America will be a leading one. If it is to be guided by something more than pure opportunism, it will be because our statesmen will be provided by the scholars of our country with a far more complete and surer understanding of the background of culture and history of the peoples of the world with which to judge the wisdom of our present and future policy. Some of the scholarship upon which these decisions may be based will seem, and in fact will be, remote from the situation presently to be dealt with. John Jay Chapman once referred to the hegemony, in his day, of the English universities in all branches of Greek scholarship as merely another manifestation of British Imperialism. If our country is to be adequately armed for the great opportunity which is the antithesis of imperialism, but nonetheless epochal, it will demand American leadership in all fields of learning. We do not fear that our scientists will be denied the instruments and laboratories which they need. So in the humanities it is to be hoped that our libraries will be able to fulfill the needs and demands of our scholars. If they do, it will be found that rare books and manuscripts form one of the most useful and most important parts of their resources. In Chaucer's day a library might be merely "twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed," but there is much truth, *mutatis mutandis,* in his familiar lines:

> *For out of olde feldes, as men sayth,*
> *Cometh al this newe corn from yer*
> *to yer,*
> *And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,*
> *Cometh al this newe science that men*
> *lere.*

The "science" to which he referred is, of course, *scientia,* learning in general, and scholarship will always be dependent on "olde bokes" for much of the wisdom which surely will be needed in the world we face today.

A Mausoleum of Books

Who has not proved the enchantment of books, their magic power, their sweet and secret solicitations? They heal the pains of lovers, they pluck from hearts a rooted sorrow, they even minister to a mind diseased. They are more restorative than rivers of morning air; more stimulating than wine; more soothing than "bowls which are friendly to bards," the bowls of those who "sit and smoke tobacco"; more provocative than drugs; more restraining than laws; more inveterate than custom, and closer than ties of blood; better than love, and more constant than friendship. Books are proved armor to the soul against the assaults of fortune; they triumph over the revenges of time; they are natural friends and allies always; a resource and a recreation; the inward support of virtue, and the solace of lonely hours.

—JOHN SAVARY, 1884.

An Act of the United States Congress, 24 April 1800, provided for the purchase of books for the use of those members who could read and for a "suitable apartment" for the collection to be located in the new Capitol in the District of Columbia. This was the beginning of what is today known as the Library of Congress, the greatest of its kind in quantity and quality in the world today.

It was this teenile collection which was destroyed when the interior of the uncompleted building was burned by orders of two marauding vandals, Robert Ross and George Cockburn, decidedly not lovers of books, much less collectors of them, who pillaged and rampaged through the city of Washington on 23-24 August 1814. (A few weeks later Ross was deservedly shot and killed while in the act of committing other iniquitous and nefarious depredations.)

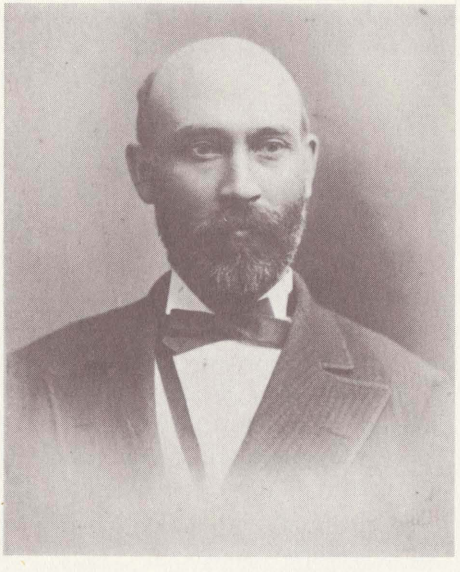
(In a wee voice the conscience of the Editor takes cognizance of the fact that in the spring of the year before, a band of rebellious American ruffians rampaged through York, now Toronto, then the capital of Upper Canada, burned the government buildings there along with the library and the archives, and stole all the silverplate from one of the churches.)

In 1815 Congress rejuvenated the Congressional collection by purchasing Thomas Jefferson's 6,487-volume library (more than half the New York delegation in the House of Representatives, including the member from Syracuse and Onondaga County, vigorously opposed and voted against the purchase of this collection; the bill squeaked through by only ten votes. The cost: $23,950). Later many of these books with a large number of others were destroyed in 1851 by an accidental fire, caused by a defective flue in the fireplace. Congress appropriated money for repairs and more books, and the fledgling

Library struggled on in its cramped and unsatisfactory quarters in the Capitol.

The situation was very little improved when thirty-nine-year-old John Savary appeared on the scene and was appointed Assistant Librarian in the spring of 1870.

Savary, a prolific and versatile writer, poet, historian, and naturalist, was born at Ward, now Auburn, a suburb of Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1832; attended Worcester Academy, Williams College (B.A., 1855), and graduated from Harvard University (Divinity School), 1860. He was ordained a Unitarian minister, but at the commencement of the War of Northern Invasion, joined the U.S. Army, saw service all



John Savary about the time he wrote A Mausoleum of Books. *From the original photograph in the Shoemaker Collection.*

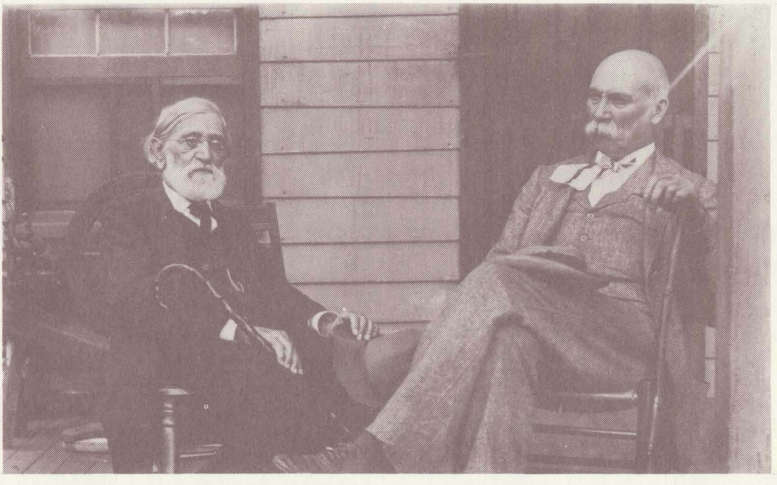
the way down to New Orleans in 1863, and wound up with the Sanitary Commission, the USO of the time. Thereafter, he travelled throughout the West, for a while (1868) lived alone in a hollow tree in Florida, the whole state, according to Savary, being definitely "outside the pale of civilization," and finally worked his way back to Washington and into the position of Assistant Librarian which he held until the end of October 1897. (In his letter of resignation, Savary wrote: "I am admonished by the flight of time, by the increasing weight of years, and, above all, by the vast need which I feel for repose and for literary

leisure, that the present is a suitable time to offer my resignation . . . ."— The Washington, D. C. *Post*, 18 October 1897. The truth was that Savary's long-time friend and chief had been replaced recently by a new Librarian and the new brome was sweepething cleene.) Savary died in the District of Columbia, 18 May 1910. (See: *Memorial Volume: Selections from the Prose and Poetical Writings of the late John Savary*, edited by his friend John Albee, to which is added a Genealogical Record of the Savary-Hall Families by Miss Marion Holman Lumway, with an Introductory Note by Daniel Murray, 270pp., illustrated. Chicago: Privately Printed, 1912.)

Savary constituted himself a one-man lobby for a new and separate building for "A National Library, Not a Mausoleum." This he was fortunate to see accomplished the year he left the employment of the federal government, 1897, when the ornate Italian Renaissance building so familiar to everyone now was constructed near and facing the Capitol itself. A most effective piece of literature in his campaign was Savary's booklet of forty-one pages, privately printed at his own expense, Washington, D. C., 1884, with the title: *A Mausoleum of Books.* This unusual piece is one of the rarest bits of library literature issued in this country, and is always being sought by collectors of books about books. There is now a copy in the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room at Syracuse University, thanks to the generosity of a donor whose family was counted among Savary's closest friends and most ardent supporters. This particular copy bears the following autograph presentation inscription signed by the author: *Dr. W. L. Shoemaker, with regards of the author, John Savary,* and was recently given to Syracuse University by the heirs of the Shoemaker estate through the administrator, Francis D. Shoemaker (Col. USAF, Ret.) of Georgetown, D. C. and Vienna, Virginia. The late and distinguished William Lukens Shoemaker, one of Col. Shoemaker's great uncles, was a graduate of Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, a poet in his own right, a book collector par excellence, a patriarchal gentleman of the first class, and one of the most notable and respected citizens of historic Georgetown during his lifetime.

It is most interesting now to go back and read John Savary's description of the conditions in "that lumber room of extinct immortalities" when it was located in the Capitol. Here are some representative passages and descriptions:

". . . this crowded cemetery, not library, but a graveyard of authors . . . every niche and alcove stuffed with the mummy cases of dead and dried authors; cords of them piled on the floors, or stacked up in the galleries, and the rising tiers of them, even to the roof, of the heavily



John Savary (viewer's right) and his friend, William Lukens Shoemaker, to whom he presented the copy of A Mausoleum of Books *now in the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room, Syracuse University. From the original photograph (taken 29 September 1895) in the Shoemaker Collection.*

loaded shelves of the Library, solidly packed with 'preserved brain,' of which the imaginary sconces would resemble most those grinning pyramids of human skulls which Timour the Tartar was wont to erect for trophies on the sites of razed and conquered cities . . . the undigested heaps of books and papers lying everywhere in sight and out of sight, in chaotic confusion. . . . The temporary expedients of placing books in double rows upon shelves, and introducing hundreds of wooden cases of shelving to contain the overflow of the alcoves have been exhausted, and books are now, from sheer force of necessity, being piled upon the floors in all directions . . . the space which five years ago was too small for this Library, is now, through the accumulation of nearly one hundred thousand additional volumes, utterly inadequate . . . at times uncomfortably crowded by those persons laudably seeking to make the best use of its rich and overflowing stores. . . . It is within the knowledge of the Librarian that students, and especially ladies, are deterred from frequenting the Library of Congress because the still air of quiet and delight for studies, which should mark the halls of every library, is farther and farther removed from those of the Library of Congress with each advancing year. . . . The Library has no packing-

room, and the bindery business, the cataloguing of books, the correspondence of the Library, the direction of assistants, and the extensive daily labors of the copyright department, are all constantly going on in those public parts of the Library which should be kept free for readers. . . . Masses of books, pamphlets, newspapers, engravings, etc., in the course of collection, cataloguing, labeling and stamping, in preparation for their proper location in the Library, are necessarily always under the eye and almost under the feet of members of Congress and other visitors. While the marble floors of the Library are littered with books and papers in various stages of preparation for use, and while crowds of visitors are constantly tramping through the place, there is no room for quiet reading and study, nor can results be exhibited without at the same time exhibiting all the processes by which those results are attained. . . . Five sessions of Congress have been allowed to pass without making an inch of progress towards the new library building. . . . Let it build, establish and endow a public library which shall be free and open to all citizens of the United States and to foreign visitors, to all and any, without distinction of race, or creed, or clime, or color, or sex, or condition, who shall come to its doors and accept its bountiful invitations, knowledge without money and without price, and Congress will have done wisely and well."

With the speed of a tranquilized turtle, Congress got up off its lethargy to do "wisely and well," and finally the new and first separate library building was constructed in 1897, with sufficient space, it was said at the time, to accommodate all acquisitions for "two centuries to come." Had Savary's booklet not ever been issued, it is a moot question how long it would have taken Congress to act. It was undoubtedly influential in the right quarters for Savary was on very good terms with generals, governors, senators, representatives, and other highly placed ilk of the "New Frontier" of his day.

The growth of the great Library of Congress through the years necessitated the construction in 1939 of a large annex—five storeys, a "basement" which is actually the street floor (Noah Webster: "basement, the lowest part of a structure"), a "sub-basement," *and* underneath that a "cellar" where one must go to reach the tunnel leading to the other building; cost: $9,244,258.75, considerably less by several millions than the cost of *one* Atlas-Agena B rocket boosting a Mariner 1 spacecraft; and the Spirit of Savary is undoubtedly rejoicing that at present there is being planned an annex to be located nearby in a part of the jungle slums which have been increasingly infesting the Capitol area and the capital city of the nation for too long a time.

His earnest endeavor as exemplified by his pamphlet *A Mauso-*

leum of Books and his pieces in the New York *Times*, the Washington, D. C. *Evening Star*, and other periodicals should make the name of John Savary remembered and revered by all readers and employees in the Library of Congress. The card catalogue carries a few entries under his name, but he is not even so much as mentioned in the official history of that great institution on Capitol Hill which he was so vitally instrumental in having built for the people of this and all other nations. Indeed, John Savary is a forgotten man.

(Note: The first edition of *A Mausoleum of Books*, 1884, carried a facsimile of Savary's signature and title of his position on the last page with no indication anywhere of the name of the printer. The copy presented by Savary to Dr. Shoemaker and in turn presented by Col. Shoemaker to Syracuse University is of this first edition. The second edition, dated the same year, does not have the facsimile, and the title page shows it was issued at Washington by A. Brentano & Co. The copy in the Rare Book Division, Library of Congress, is of this second edition.)

Lunar Literature and Moon Squeezers

On the front page of the Washington, D. C. *Evening Star*, 17 July last, appeared an Associated Press dispatch from Cleveland, Ohio, giving an account of space scientists attending a lunar missions meeting in the Buckeye city at that time. The literate people of the metropolitan area surrounding the nation's capital (where, according to the latest statistics, eighteen out of every 100 people, exclusive of Congressmen and other transients, are unable to read and write in English or in any other language) were informed in the first two of the nine paragraphs of the article that:

"The possibility that the moon may have an abundant water supply, including geysers and subsurface glaciers, was suggested today by an internationally known lunar expert.

"Dr. Zdenek Kopal, British astrophysicist, said the moon's water supply may be so great that if squeezed out it could cover the lunar globe's surface to a uniform depth of 984 feet."

This is not at all new news.

These and other equally minacious minutiae were made known and advertised far and wide at Syracuse University three years ago, during November and December 1959, when an exhibit was held of a selection from the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room of fictional accounts of interplanetary travel and of trips to the moon, written from about 160 A.D. to the beginning of the twentieth century. (See: the *Courier*, Vol. I, No. 10, July 1961.)

In connection with that exhibition, the Library issued a fourteen-page *Commentary* composed with a foreword by Mr. Lester G. Wells,

Librarian of the Lena R. Arents Rare Book Room. Copies were distributed *gratis* to viewers of the attractive display of rare and medium-rare books, and others were mailed to a list of selected names of people and institutions likely to be interested in the subject. Following the close of the exhibit, requests were received by mail by Mr. Wells for copies of the *Commentary* and these exhausted the supply in due course. Copies of this first edition are now considered collectors' items in *Lunar Literature.*

Mr. Wells continued to receive communications asking for copies of the *Commentary* (including one from San Quentin Prison; but none from Robert Stroud, avian watcher and monastic ornithologist for the past fifty-two years at Alcatraz), until recently the outstanding requests reached such an astronomical figure as to justify the issue of the second (now illustrated and revised) edition of this extraordinary publication.

This new edition under the title: *Fictional Accounts of Trips to the Moon,* was designed in his inimitable style by Dr. M. Peter Piening of the School of Art, who saw the booklet through the Syracuse University Press, and afterwards declared it to be one of his proudest accomplishments.

Members of Syracuse University Library Associates who would like to have a copy *gratis* may apply to its author, Mr. Wells, either in person, in writing, or by telephone except by long distance collect via Telstar.

(Dr. Cyrano de B. Pfaall, Washington, D. C., well-known American astrophysicist and lychnobitic lunarian, upon reading the Cleveland report about Dr. Kopal, commented to his visitor at the time, the Editor of the *Courier*: "I had always thought the figure was 983 feet." Trying to explain this disparity, Dr. Pfaall added, "I guess I just didn't squeeze hard enough.")

Good News from Suffolk

From Dr. A. Daly Briscoe, President of the Omar Khayyam Club in England, has come the intelligence that that august organization now proposes to issue a third book to cover its activities during the years 1929-1961.

Dr. Briscoe's communication to the Editor of *The Courier* reads in part as follows:

"The Annals of the Omar Khayyam Club are in need of bringing up to date. The story of the Club's foundation and its early dinners was told in the first book of the Omar Khayyam Club of which 181 copies only were printed. The introduction to this volume was written

by Edward Clodd, and the book covered the years 1892-1910. The subsequent history of the club from 1910-1929 was related in the second book of which 125 copies were printed. The introduction was by Philip Guedalla. All the illustrations and all the poems from the menu cards for these years were reproduced in both books as well as the names of all members and guests present at the dinners.

"It is proposed to cover the years 1929-1961 in a third book. The club was in abeyance from 1939 because of the Second World War and did not get going again until 1947, so there would be 50 menu cards to be reproduced. There are drawings by Low, Martin Hardie, Will Owen, James McBey, Aubrey Hammond, Sir W. Russell Flint, Robert S. Austin, Bert Thomas, Fougasse, Osbert Lancaster, Gilbert Spencer, Ronald Searle, David Langdon, Sprod, Edward Ardizzone, and Nicolas Bentley, and poems by Arthur R. Ropes, Sir E. Denison Ross, Arthur Wimperis, Humbert Wolfe, Victor Bridges, James Laver, R. H. Mottram, Patrick Hamilton, Geoffrey Winthrop Young, W. F. Harvey, Walter De La Mare, D. B. Wyndham Lewis, Evoe, Richard Church, Vyvyan Holland, Clarence Winchester, J. W. Lambert, Peter Dickinson, P. M. Hubbard, B. A. Young, Michael Albery, Paul Jennings, and Richard Usborne. None of these is available elsewhere.

"As in the first two books there would be an introduction and a full list of members and guests for the period covered.

". . . The first two volumes are virtually unobtainable now and if they do appear on the secondhand market are snapped up and a number have gone to America."

Dr. Briscoe is correct: the first two books of the Omar Khayyam Club are indeed collectors' items now, and the chances are pretty good that the proposed *Third Book* will very soon come within the same category.

Through the courtesy of Dr. Briscoe and the members of the Omar Khayyam Club the privilege of acquiring copies of the *Third Book* is extended to Library Associates, and those who are interested should write air mail to: Dr. A. Daly Briscoe, Seckford Lodge, Woodbridge, Suffolk, England.

The price of this privately printed edition, limited to 200 copies, is $9.80, post free.